



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1116  
Vienna, 27 October 2016**

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**EU Statement in Response to the Address by the President  
of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr Peter  
Maurer**

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The European Union would like to warmly welcome President Maurer of the ICRC to the Permanent Council. Mr. President, we thank you for your statement. Your presence gives us an opportunity to pay tribute to the unique organisation you lead.

Recalling the 2009 EU Guidelines on International Humanitarian Law, we reiterate our commitment to promoting compliance with international humanitarian law. We reiterate our commitment to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and to preventing politicisation of humanitarian aid.

We are convinced that national implementation and enforcement of international humanitarian law and other relevant legal instruments are of great importance. The EU continues to support states in their efforts to adopt national legislation pertaining to their international humanitarian law obligations. The EU is also funding programmes to help build effective and accountable security and justice sectors. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy foresees a number of actions in this regard in view of the creation of a mechanism at international level to review compliance of existing instruments. The EU also has had a record contribution this year to the ICRC's emergency operations, as a testimony of our profound appreciation and recognition of your work.

Mr. President,

The OSCE and ICRC have different mandates and responsibilities, but we see much of the work undertaken overlapping in several geographical contexts and activities complementing each other.

Since your previous address to the Permanent Council in January 2014, the dire humanitarian crisis caused by the crisis in and around Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea has affected millions of civilians. We use this opportunity to reiterate our deep concern by the human rights violations in areas of eastern Ukraine and on Ukraine's Crimean peninsula. Reports by the ICRC, the UN as well as the OSCE have documented the severe patterns of human rights violations and abuse, including enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture and ill treatment and the severe curtailment of fundamental freedoms.

We commend your tireless and vital efforts in eastern Ukraine to deliver humanitarian aid to those in need, restore vital infrastructure, as well as your work related to detainees and missing persons. Your assistance in avoiding the water supply to Luhansk Region being cut off is yet another recent manifestation of your crucial work. However, the ICRC still faces severe restrictions, particularly in separatist-held areas, and continues to be denied access to the illegally annexed Crimea. Guaranteed safe and unimpeded humanitarian access throughout Ukraine is vital. We also call for the ICRC to receive full, safe and unimpeded access to all detainees and prisoners.

We commend the work of ICRC in protecting lives and dignity of victims of armed conflicts worldwide. The OSCE area remains plagued by protracted conflicts and by difficult post-conflict situations. Our efforts in the OSCE go towards resolution of protracted conflicts and improving the situation of those affected. We commend your work on issues such as missing persons, visiting detention facilities, and local confidence building measures which are concrete and valuable contributions towards our shared goal of stability and peace. But humanitarian action cannot be a substitute for political solutions. We are determined to continue to push for a resolution of all these conflicts.

The world is facing the largest scale of forced displacement since World War II with more than 65 million people displaced globally, including over 21 million refugees. Managing the large movements of migrants and refugees together with our partners remains at the top of the European agenda. Providing support and protection to people in need is a challenge that requires a global response. In this regard, we

value the work of ICRC directed towards keeping families together, reuniting them, and helping them recover the bodies of those who died on the journey.

We conclude this statement by reiterating our sincere respect for and support to the ICRC staff in Geneva and all over the world, who carry out their duty often in the most dangerous circumstances. We wish you, Mr. President, every success in carrying out your important mission.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.